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Rajnath seeks global collaboration for boosting maritime capabilities



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday urged international partners to collaborate with India in developing maritime next-generation capabilities, highlighting the country's advancing shipbuilding ecosystem. He emphasised that every ship currently under construction for the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard was being built at Indian shipyards, reaffirming the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Delivering the keynote address at Samudra Utkarsh, a seminar organised by the Department of Defence Production in Delhi, he asked global stakeholders to tap into India's potential in co-building sustainable technologies and resilient supply chains for an innovative, inclusive and secure maritime future. Mr. Singh pointed to India's world-class platforms — such as the first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, Kalvari-class submarines, and a variety of stealth frigates and destroyers — as evidence of the nation's growing technological maturity, design capability and systems integration expertise. The Minister commended the private sector for emerging as a force multiplier by building green-fuel vessels, LNG carriers, Ro Ro ships, and energy-efficient commercial platforms for domestic and international clients. This comprehensive capability, he said, positioned India to become a major global hub for ship building, ship repair, and maritime innovation in the coming decade. Mr. Singh said the Navy had 262 indigenous design and development projects under progress, with some shipyards nearing 100% indigenous content, ensuring minimal supply-chain disruptions.

Grit endures:



People gathered outside the Taj Mahal Palace, a key site of the 2008 Mumbai terror strikes, on the eve of the attacks' anniversary on Tuesday.



The Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Upendra Dwivedi, on Tuesday paid homage to soldiers who laid down their lives during Operation Pawan, the 1987 Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) mission in Sri Lanka. Operation Pawan was started in October 1987 and ended in 1990, resulted in hundreds of personnel killed and over a thousand injured. The IPKF received numerous gallantry medals.

Assam proposes jail term, heavy fines for polygamy

- Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has tabled the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025 in the State Assembly, which criminalizes polygamy for residents of Assam.
- The Bill prescribes imprisonment up to seven years, and up to ten years if someone marries while concealing an existing marriage. Repeat offenders face doubled punishment.
- Heavy fines accompany jail terms: up to ₹1 lakh for individuals, and fines extending to ₹1.5 lakh for religious officiants (like priests or qazis) who knowingly solemnize a prohibited marriage.
- The law applies to residents marrying outside Assam if they own property in the state or receive state-funded benefits, but excludes Scheduled Tribes and Sixth Schedule areas due to their customary laws and constitutional protections.
- According to its stated aims, the bill seeks to protect women from hardship, eliminate polygamy, and "streamline society." It also provides remedies for women affected by prohibited marriages.
- Anyone who "wilfully hides, neglects, or unreasonably delays" information to police regarding polygamous marriages will be punished as a main offender, with jail up to ten years and fines up to ₹1 lakh.
- Offenders will be barred from government jobs, benefits, and election candidacy; polygamous marriages performed before the law comes into effect will not be penalized, provided they were legal under existing personal or customary laws.
- The Bill gives police the authority to intervene before a prohibited marriage takes place, aiming to prevent its solemnization.

Implications and Context

- The Bill targets not just bigamy but all multiple marriages, aiming for social reform and women's protection in the state.
- Its sweeping applicability to residents with property or benefits within Assam represents an effort to close loopholes in the existing legal framework.
- The exclusion of Scheduled Tribes and areas under Sixth Schedule acknowledges India's diversity in personal law and the constitutional autonomy of certain tribal groups.

Timeline and Legislative Process

- The Bill was tabled on November 25, 2025, after Cabinet approval and public consultation since August 2025, showing a deliberate, consultative approach by the state government.
- Prevalence of polygamy is higher in tribal belts, especially in Northeastern states where customary law overrides general statutes.
- Uttarakhand and Assam have moved to specifically criminalize polygamy under new civil codes or bills, but tribal exemptions remain.

Arunachal Pradesh is an integral and inalienable part of India: MEA

- This centers around the detention of an Indian citizen from Arunachal Pradesh at Shanghai airport, where Chinese officials refused to recognize the Indian passport due to her birthplace being Arunachal Pradesh.
- India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) strongly condemned this incident, asserting that Arunachal Pradesh is an "integral and inalienable part of India."
- The MEA called China's action a violation of international air travel conventions and highlighted that Chinese authorities have still not explained their actions despite diplomatic engagement.
- The detained individual, Prema Wangjom Thongdok, described her experience of being held for 18 hours at the airport after arriving on November 21, 2025. She stated her passport was not recognized because Chinese authorities claimed Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory.
- The Eastern Airlines restarted Shanghai-Delhi connectivity after five years, and this incident occurred on a newly resumed flight.

Diplomatic and Regulatory Context

- The MEA spokesperson, Randhir Jaiswal, asserted that India's position on Arunachal Pradesh as its territory is non-negotiable and widely accepted internationally.
- The Chinese side maintained that their actions were lawful and denied any mistreatment or compulsory measures towards the detained citizen.
- China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, stated the woman was treated according to laws and regulations, provided with food, drink, and a place to rest, and her legal rights were protected.

Political Responses

- Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu called for urgent intervention by New Delhi, describing the treatment as "humiliating and a mockery," despite the individual possessing a valid Indian passport.
- The Indian government has refuted Chinese allegations of harassment and highlighted inconsistencies in Chinese border inspection practices.

Implications

- The incident illustrates ongoing tensions between India and China regarding Arunachal Pradesh, with China referring to the region as "Zangnan" or part of "South Tibet."
- The episode is part of broader disputes and diplomatic disagreement, impacting not only individuals but also the bilateral relationship and public perceptions of border and sovereignty issues.
- This spotlights the intersection of individual rights, national identity, and international political disputes in the context of air travel and border management.

Broader Relevance

- Highlights the continued sensitivity and complexity around the India-China border and disputed territories.
- Demonstrates how ordinary citizens become caught up in geopolitical disputes, especially when traveling internationally.
- Reinforces India's diplomatic stance and ongoing efforts to counter Chinese territorial claims on global platforms.

Toxic air is a year-round blight in 60% of Indian districts: study

- 60% of India's districts—447 out of 749—are exposed to levels of particulate matter (PM2.5) pollution that exceed the annual standard set by the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS).
- No district reported concentrations within the World Health Organisation's much stricter annual guideline of $5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. India's own standard is eight times higher at $40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.
- Delhi and Assam are the worst-affected states, each accounting for 11 of the top 50 most polluted districts. Together, Delhi, Assam, Bihar (7), and Haryana (7) make up nearly half of the 50 most polluted districts.
- Other states with several highly polluted districts include Uttar Pradesh (4), Tripura (3), Rajasthan (2), and West Bengal (2).

Patterns in Pollution Exposure

- The concentration of pollution is not limited to winter as commonly perceived. PM2.5 levels are above NAAQS limits year-round in many districts.
- Population exposure is greatest in northern and eastern states, highlighting regional disparities in air quality.
- Conversely, most districts in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, Sikkim, Goa, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu have annual exposure numbers below the prescribed NAAQS standard, making these states relatively "cleaner".

Seasonal Effects and Wider Implications

- Winter months (December to February) see the highest pollution. During this period, 82% of districts (616 out of 749) record values breaching the national standard.
- Southern and coastal regions tend to be less affected, revealing geographic contrasts in air pollution exposure across India.
- The findings challenge the belief that severe air pollution is only a winter problem, showing its persistence throughout the entire year in much of the country.

Takeaway

- India faces a pervasive, year-round crisis of air pollution with urban, northern, and eastern districts most at risk. The standards currently exceeded in most areas highlight urgent gaps in current pollution control and environmental health policy.

Six years on, mystery over illegal GM seeds' source stays unsolved

- Over six years have passed since banned genetically modified (GM) Bt brinjal crops surfaced in Fatehabad, Haryana, but the source of the seeds remains unidentified and unexplained.
- Government responses to RTI requests cite the destruction of the crops and state that "necessary steps" were taken to contain contamination, yet no investigation has traced the original source of the seeds.
- The Haryana farmer, Jeevan, who planted the crop in late 2017, claimed ignorance of the GM nature of the purchased saplings, which were reportedly bought from a roadside vendor.
- Commercial cultivation of Bt brinjal is banned in India; the protest and destruction of the crop followed an outcry led by activists worried about environmental and food-chain contamination.
- Activists have criticized the government's passive response, arguing that neither the farmer nor any individual seed developer could be solely responsible for the illegal crop's proliferation.

Administrative and Investigative Actions

- RTI inquiries to various government offices—including the Horticulture Department and District Horticulture Officer—did not reveal any concrete leads or details regarding the seed vendor's identity or supply chain.
- Environmental bodies sought more information and action, yet official responses failed to identify where or how the illicit seeds had entered the local market, despite repeated calls for deeper investigation and stricter oversight.
- Haryana's Biotechnology Coordination Committee recommended and oversaw the destruction of the GM crop in May 2019.

Concerns and Criticisms

- Activists and academics express fear that transgenic varieties could contaminate the broader food chain and threaten environmental safety.
- Critics argue the government has neglected its duty to proactively prevent future incidents and protect consumer health through effective environmental and health controls on GM seeds.
- The case highlights persistent gaps in biosafety oversight and difficulties in regulating the spread of unauthorized GM crops in India.

Caste must not be allowed to divide us, whatever the circumstance: CJI

- Chief Justice of India Surya Kant emphasized that society must not be “divided” based on caste lines, especially in the context of the government’s announcement of a caste census.
- He responded to submissions in court that raised concerns about the political reservation for OBCs in local body elections in Maharashtra and the proportional representation of communities.
- The CJI stated: “OBCs must get adequate representation, but is it happening at the cost of everyone being ousted or is it that they can be accommodated, and others can also be reasonably accommodated. We need to see how to balance this,” highlighting the importance of inclusivity while ensuring representation for all segments.

Background and Legal Context

- There has not been a national caste census since 1931, apart from some targeted data for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The new caste census aims to ascertain the proportion of OBCs in the population, which is crucial under Article 15 of the Constitution on reservations in rural self-governance.
- Disputes arose in Maharashtra when 57 out of 288 local bodies were found to exceed the 50% reservation limit for OBCs, violating a Supreme Court benchmark. The issue has stalled local body elections since 2022 due to litigation regarding compliance with the 50% cap.

Judiciary’s Actions and Directives

- The Supreme Court indicated it would facilitate the conduct of stalled elections using a “workable arrangement” until all legal issues were resolved.
- The Court ordered the State Election Commission to submit details on the OBC percentage in each of the 57 disputed local bodies and affirmed that elections should proceed without excluding representation at grassroots levels.
- The Constitution Bench will be asked to clarify matters surrounding the reservation cap for local body elections and to resolve ambiguity (“grey areas”) in the law.

Criticisms and Concerns

- Senior advocate Indira Jaising argued that the OBC census is important to ensure political representation and prevent exclusion. She contended that the government has delayed local bodies’ elections, impacting public participation and democratic governance.
- Activists and legal experts stress the risk of excessive reservation marginalizing other communities, underscoring the need to balance equity and representativeness.

CISF personnel honoured for saving lives during Operation Sindoor

- Nineteen CISF personnel were honored with the ‘DG’s disc’ for exceptional operational performance during Operation Sindoor in May 2025.
- The operation centered on ensuring the safety of the strategically crucial Uri-I and Uri-II hydroelectric projects, located about 10 km from the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Amid intense Pakistani shelling and drone activity targeting National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) installations, CISF units neutralized hostile drones and redistributed arms to safeguard stockpiles from destruction.
- Personnel conducted door-to-door evacuation of approximately 250 civilians, including NHPC staff and their families, and provided them with emergency assistance despite hazardous conditions.
- Command leadership and teamwork were also recognized, with names of officers and personnel led by Commandant Ravi Yadav listed in the honors.

Strategic and Humanitarian Impact

- CISF’s decisive actions protected critical infrastructure and a major civilian population by preventing casualties through rapid evacuation, bunker relocation, and maintenance of satellite communications.
- The force upheld high standards of courage and national commitment, operating under direct threat from shells and drones.
- The event showcased the growing overlap of national security and disaster response, positioning paramilitary forces as first responders in hybrid conflict scenarios.

Recognition and Commendation

- The citation from CISF Director-General Praveer Ranjan praised personnel for “rare courage under fire” and their “unwavering commitment to national security.”
- The event underscores the importance of paramilitary forces in India’s evolving security landscape and highlights their ability to respond effectively in high-pressure crisis situations.



PRELIMS CORNER :

1.The Matabari Tourism Circuit which aims to boost cultural, spiritual, and eco-tourism is to be set up in which state?

- (a) Nagaland**
- (b) Tripura**
- (c) Assam**
- (d) Sikkim**

2.Ramman is a festival celebrated annually in April during Baisakhi in which of the following states?

- (a) Bihar**
- (b) Uttar Pradesh**
- (c) Uttarakhand**
- (d) Assam**

3.Which one of the following gases is the primary cause of Ocean acidification?

- (a) Methane**
- (b) Carbon monoxide**
- (c) Carbon dioxide**
- (d) Sulphur dioxide**

4.Which is the only national park that protects endangered Nilgiri tahr?

- (a) Periyar National Park**
- (b) Eravikulam National Park**
- (c) Kaziranga National Park**
- (d) Gir National Park**

DETAILED ANSWER KEY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CHRONICLE PAGE

NATIONAL

Custodial torture: SC raps govt. over CCTV compliance

- The Supreme Court criticized the Union government and states for their lackluster response and slow implementation of a 2020 judgment mandating CCTV cameras in police stations and offices of central law enforcement agencies with interrogation powers.
- The court was alarmed by recent custodial deaths—specifically 11 deaths in Rajasthan—highlighting ongoing concerns about custodial torture and the need for CCTV as a safeguard against human rights violations.
- Only 11 out of many states and union territories had filed compliance reports regarding CCTV installation, and the Centre failed to provide an affidavit or substantial follow-up regarding its implementation.
- The bench, led by Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, noted that government responses were slow, condescending, and showed disregard for the severity of custodial torture.

Key Judicial and Government Exchanges

- Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta claimed the Centre was taking the issue seriously and promised to file an affidavit, but the bench sharply corrected him, stating compliance—not affidavits—was required.
- The judges referenced practices in other countries, debating the pros and cons of live-streaming police station feeds as done in the U.S., but also pointed out that some prisons there were “private resort-type”.
- The bench suggested police station CCTV could be counter-productive if used as only a security measure, and highlighted the broader need for reform in overcrowded prisons.
- The court extended time for further affidavits but required that principal home secretaries of all remaining states file compliance reports before the next hearing.

Legal and Social Impact

- The original 2020 judgment, Paramanand Singh Saini v. State of Punjab, directed compulsory installation of CCTV cameras and audio-recording equipment as protection against custodial torture.
- The court reaffirmed that such surveillance is a key step toward protecting the right to dignity and life for those in custody, and called for urgent progress and accountability from both central and state authorities.
- The ongoing litigation signals the judiciary’s intent to enforce human rights safeguards in law enforcement processes through technological oversight.

Over 80% nations got loans from China in the last two decades

China's Global Lending in Two Decades

- China has provided over \$2.1 trillion in loans and grants to more than 80% of countries and regions worldwide from 2000 to 2023, with about 179 out of 223 countries/territories receiving credit from Chinese state-owned banks.
- The United States was the largest beneficiary, securing almost \$200 billion for U.S. projects and initiatives, mostly through commercial rather than developmental loans. Over 75% of loans given to the US were commercial in nature.
- Russia (\$171.2 billion) and India (\$81.1 billion) are the second and third highest recipients after the US, as shown in the loan amount map and rankings.

Portfolio Composition and Trends

- Most Chinese overseas credit was initially focused on infrastructure development in emerging or developing nations under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Now, China's portfolio increasingly includes high-income, commercial lending clients.
- Belt and Road Initiative loans now account for about 25% of total Chinese international lending, down from the previous 75% share.
- This data indicates many countries such as Venezuela, Argentina, and Kazakhstan have received significant amounts of Chinese loans—with Venezuela receiving \$130 billion and Argentina \$106 billion.

Lending Dynamics and Policy Shifts

- China's shift from developmental to commercial lending reflects a major change in its role as a global creditor: it is now the world's largest creditor and debt collector, with outstanding credit of \$320 billion in 2000 surging to \$943 billion in 2022.
- Although China remains an important provider of loans to low- and middle-income countries (about 50% of commitments in 2023), the majority of new initiatives now target richer nations and commercial ventures.
- Map and data highlight that China's lending is more diversified geographically and sectorally than in previous decades, influencing patterns of global economic dependence and debt.

Geopolitical and Economic Implications

- Beijing's lending enables significant leverage in debtor countries, including both low-income nations and the world's largest economies.
- The trend brings strategic implications for global debt sustainability, policy autonomy, and China's growing role not just as a development financier, but as a commercial lender and political stakeholder worldwide.

For Assam tea, erratic climate and stagnant prices present a crisis

- Assam's tea gardens, supporting over 1.2 million workers, face unprecedented stress from erratic climatic conditions—prolonged dry spells, unpredictable rainfall, late winters, and higher night-time temperatures exacerbate instability in tea cultivation.
- Tea thrives only within a narrow set of environmental parameters: ideal mean temperatures (18-32°C), annual rainfall mostly between 1,500-2,500 mm, and well-drained acidic soils. Recent changes now challenge these norms, including soil moisture loss, shifting rainfall timing, higher mean and maximum temperatures, and increasing pest/disease risks.
- Despite these challenges, tea prices have stagnated for decades, rising only 69% while input costs have doubled. This stagnation makes the crisis not just ecological but economic, threatening the livelihoods of workers and the viability of the industry.

Social and Electoral Impact

- Tea tribes—the core plantation workforce—represent a powerful and politically significant constituency. Their concerns and vulnerabilities are expected to feature prominently in electoral debates, especially amid rising distress and demands for protection and compensation.
- Plantations rely on cyclical climate rhythms, needing "good" years for viability. However, climate shocks—like delayed winter and erratic rainfall—undermine production stability and community welfare, deepening vulnerability.

Adaptation and Policy Response

- Mitigation measures are being attempted, such as soil conservation, cover cropping, alternate crop cycles, and water management (micro-irrigation, water harvesting). However, results remain uneven and risk persists.
- The Indian government's MSP-like price support, climate-resilience programs, and research into drought-resistant and disease-resistant hybrid tea clones are underway, aiming to secure the future of Assam's tea ecosystem and worker livelihoods.
- Innovations and schemes (like PM-KUSUM, agriculture diversification, climate smart farming incentives) are designed to complement tea gardens and provide alternate income but face routine challenges—low uptake, lack of comprehensive resilience, and market uncertainties.

Broader Implications

- The tea crisis in Assam exemplifies how climate volatility, stagnant prices, and ecological stress together threaten even deep-rooted and globally significant agricultural systems. It also highlights the interplay between environmental resilience and economic justice for millions of rural laborers.

'Rupee is Asia's worst performing currency'

- The Indian Rupee (INR) depreciated 4.3% against the U.S. Dollar in the 2025 calendar year, making it the worst-performing currency in Asia currently.
- Analysts warn that the rupee may further slide toward the 90 per USD mark if a crucial trade deal with the U.S. does not materialize soon.
- In comparison, other Asian currencies—the Indonesian Rupiah fell 2.9%, the Philippine Peso 1.3%, while the Chinese Yuan appreciated—revealing weaker currency fundamentals for the INR.

Causes of Depreciation

- The INR's underperformance is attributed to global dollar strength, India's twin external deficits, high U.S. interest rates, and the Trump administration's imposition of 50% tariffs on Indian exports in 2025.
- These tariffs, along with increased U.S. FDI inflows into India's bond markets and reduced capital inflows for equity, have exerted downward pressure on the rupee.
- India's external conditions—including slower export earnings and lingering trade policy challenges compared to China and Korea—amplify vulnerability.

Market and Technical Dynamics

- The rupee touched new lows against the USD in November 2025, reaching 88.58 and briefly dipping toward 89.66 before some modest recovery, settling around 89.22.
- Currency strategists expect persistent weakness unless positive developments on trade or investor sentiment emerge. Moody's and Caution Ratings expect the rupee to depreciate further to 90 per USD if the U.S.-India trade deal fails.

Broader Implications

- The INR's slide reflects structural weaknesses in India's economy and the adverse impact of both global and bilateral U.S. factors, posing heightened risk for investors and increasing import costs.
- The rupee's volatility highlights India's dependence on external capital flows and underscores the need for stable policy environments to attract investment and support currency resilience.

Net FDI negative for second straight month in September

- Net foreign direct investment (FDI) in India was negative for the second consecutive month in September 2025, with -\$2.4 billion recorded—a result of outflows from repatriations by foreign firms and overseas investments by Indian companies exceeding gross FDI inflows.
- Gross FDI into India for September stood at \$6.6 billion, about 4.3% higher than in the same month last year, but this was outpaced by a 64.4% surge in Indian investment abroad (\$3.8 billion) and foreign repatriations (\$5.2 billion, down 0.2% year-on-year).
- The negative net FDI (+outflows minus inflows) illustrates a reversal of capital direction: more money exited than entered, marking continued capital pressure after August's -\$0.6 billion net FDI.

Underlying Factors

- Growing Indian investment overseas and repatriations by foreign companies were responsible for the negative net FDI, despite the increase in gross FDI inflows.
- The article clarifies that net FDI covers only direct investments (in business assets) and excludes portfolio investments (like equities and bonds).

Longer-Term Perspective

- FDI numbers improve when viewed over the July-September quarter, with gross FDI 15.4% higher than in the corresponding period last year, showing continuing investor interest in Indian assets despite monthly volatility.

Implications

- Persistent net FDI outflows signal weakening confidence or higher global investment opportunities for Indian firms, as well as possible concerns over business climate or returns on investment within India.
- While monthly numbers are negative, the overall quarterly uptick in gross FDI suggests resilience and global investor appetite remains but is challenged by outflows and profit repatriation pressures.

Wide exit

Gross FDI coming into India stood at \$6.6 billion in September 2025, about 4.3% higher than in September last

- This amount was 9.1% higher than it was in August
- Strong inflows were outpaced by the outflows, particularly when it came to foreign investments done by Indian companies



Jihadist attacks fuel record hunger in Nigeria's volatile north: UN agency

- Jihadist attacks and instability in northern Nigeria have caused extreme levels of hunger, with nearly 35 million people projected to face severe food insecurity during the 2026 lean season (May to September), according to the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN.
- In Borno state, the epicenter of conflict, 15,000 people are expected to reach “famine-like conditions” or catastrophic hunger in the coming year. The conflict in Borno has lasted 16 years and displaced about 2 million people to other regions and countries, with more than 40,000 deaths.
- Since 2015, a lull in violence has given way to renewed insurgent attacks, shrinking food reserves and worsening livelihoods in rural areas.

Economic Pressures and Humanitarian Shortfalls

- Inflation, economic crisis, and reduced purchasing power compound the impact—farmers can no longer buy food reserves, leaving them exposed during the lean period between planting and harvest.
- Funding shortfalls have forced WFP and the UN to cut back nutrition programs since July. The U.S., once the largest donor, has reduced foreign aid, and European contributions have shrunk their humanitarian budgets as well.
- By the end of July, 150 of 500 nutrition centers run by WFP in northeast Nigeria stopped operating due to lack of funding, leaving 300,000 children at heightened risk of “serious” and “critical” malnutrition in the third quarter of 2025.

Ramifications

- Other humanitarian actors have been forced to adjust interventions downward, leaving over a million people dependent on diminishing food aid, vulnerable to famine-like conditions.
- Nearly all aspects of the crisis—displacement, violence, food insecurity, inflation—combine to threaten stability and wellbeing, producing an unprecedented emergency for families, children, and communities in Nigeria’s north.



U.S. escalates pressure on Maduro by labelling alleged cartel a terror group

- The Trump administration escalated measures against Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro by designating ‘Cartel de los Soles’ as a foreign terrorist organization, alleging it is responsible for “terrorist violence” and major drug trafficking in the Western Hemisphere.
- U.S. officials argue the cartel ties senior Venezuelan military figures to drug running, but the entity itself is loosely defined and overlapping with government and military activities, lacking coherence as a cartel per se.
- The move fuels opposition campaigns and military options targeting Maduro, building on expanded Caribbean U.S. military presence and political support for U.S.-backed Venezuelan opposition.

Diplomatic and Political Dynamics

- Venezuelan authorities and President Maduro call the terror designation “ridiculous fabrication,” alleging it as a pretext for regime change. U.S. accusations build upon long-standing charges of drug trafficking against members of Maduro’s inner circle.
- The label gives Washington increased leverage for sanctions, isolation, and international pressure, and is cited in congressional hearings and U.S. presidential narratives about combating organized crime and transnational threats.
- The U.S. Defense Secretary stated the designation would provide “new options for U.S. government response,” raising speculation about further direct action or military involvement.

Regional and Global Context

- Similar designations and sanctions have been used against groups across Latin America, including FARC and ELN in Colombia. The article suggests only about 5% of cocaine produced in Colombia transits Venezuela, questioning the narrative driving the U.S. strategy.
- European donors and the United Nations have voiced skepticism about U.S. claims, suggesting the decision has limited international legal support and is designed mainly to deepen regime pressure.
- The situation has deepened Venezuela’s diplomatic isolation and increased political uncertainty, especially with Trump’s promise to intensify restrictions and support local dissident groups opposing Maduro’s rule.

Implications

- The escalation cements the Trump administration’s hardline position while amplifying tensions in U.S.-Venezuela relations, further polarizing the internal political situation and risking expanded international fallout in the region.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans b

To transform Tripura into a vibrant hub of cultural, spiritual and eco-tourism by connecting key heritage and nature sites across the state. The project forms part of the Prime Minister Modi's vision of transforming Northeast India into a vibrant global tourism hub. It is a 4-night, 5-day itinerary designed to showcase Tripura's rich cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and spiritual landmarks. It includes: Agartala – the state capital and gateway to Tripura; Neer Mahal – a stunning lake palace blending Hindu and Mughal architecture; Sepahijala – known for its wildlife sanctuary and botanical gardens; Udaipur – home to the revered Tripura Sundari Temple (Matabari); Chabimura – famous for its rock carvings on steep hill faces; Dumboor Lake – a picturesque spot with islands and boating options.

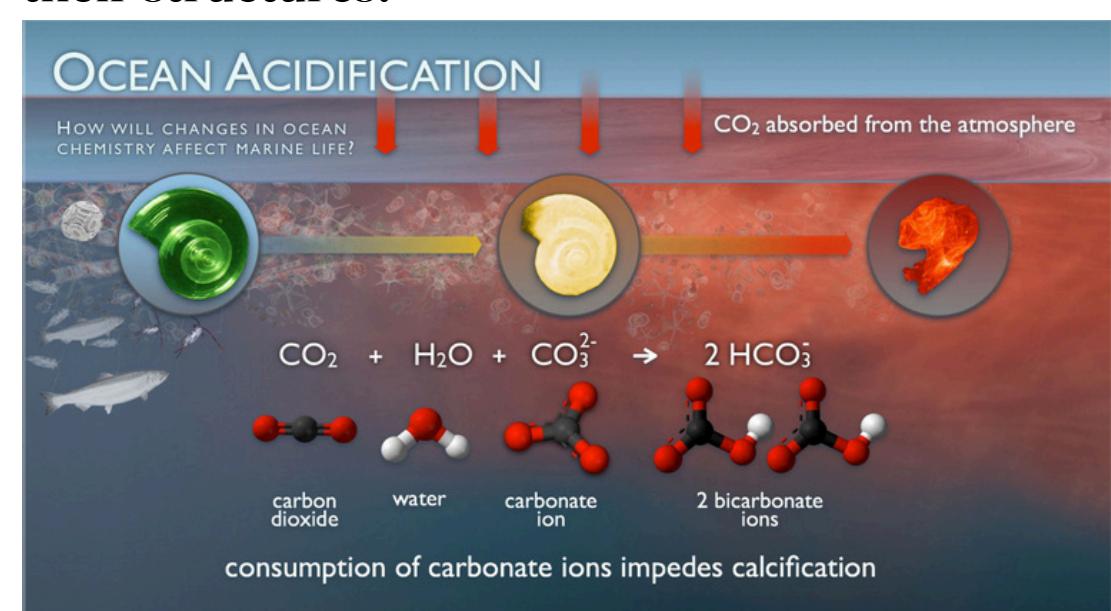


Q2. Ans c

Ramman is a festival celebrated annually in April during Baisakhi at the twin villages of Saloor-Dungra in Uttarakhand's Chamoli. It is a unique blend of ritual, theatre, music, and dance, deeply rooted in the local traditions of the Garhwal Himalayas. Community - It is dedicated to the custodial god, Bhumiyal Devta, a local divinity whose temple houses most of the festivities. The festival involves theatrical performances of the Ramayana and local legends, in which people sing songs and wear masks while dancing. There are 18 different types of masks made of Bhojpatra, Himalayan birch, that performers wear during the event, represent different deities and mythological figures.

Q3. Ans c

The primary cause of ocean acidification is carbon dioxide (CO₂). When increased amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere dissolve in seawater, it reacts with water to form carbonic acid, which lowers the ocean's pH, making it more acidic. Most of the increased CO₂ in the atmosphere is due to burning fossil fuels for energy production and transportation. Ocean acidification can negatively affect many marine organisms, particularly those with calcium carbonate shells or skeletons, as it can make it difficult for them to build and maintain their structures.



Q4. Ans b

Eravikulam National Park is the only national park that primarily protects the endangered Nilgiri tahr. It is home to the largest population of Nilgiri tahrs in the world. The park was established to protect the indigenous population of the Nilgiri tahr, which is an endangered mountain goat species. It is located in the Western Ghats of Kerala and is a critical stronghold for the species' conservation. The park was declared a sanctuary in 1975 and upgraded to a National Park in 1978, specifically with the objective of protecting the Nilgiri tahr population.



Case Study:



In a Tucked-Away Goa Village, Women Are Restoring Pride to a Saree That Carried Generations of Stigma

The rhythm is ancient, a gentle thack-thack-thack that speaks of patience and skill. But the voices weaving through the air in this bright, airy space in North Goa are telling a decidedly modern story. This is not a scene from a bygone era; it is a vibrant workshop at the Heritage First Goa festival, where the humble Kunbi saree is being reimagined as a fabric of change, woven by the determined hands of women. Recognisable by its red and white checkered pattern, the Kunbi saree reflects the identity and pride of the Kunbi tribe, one of Goa's oldest indigenous communities. "Kunbi sarees were associated with a particular community that traditionally wore them," "Caste-wise, it was not considered 'high level'. These sarees are handwoven using natural fibres and dyes, rooted in sustainability and simplicity. Traditionally worn without a blouse and tied on the shoulder, its unique feature was that it had two borders because it was tied on the shoulder. However, their path wasn't easy. They faced material shortages and a relentless search for a space until a village elder saw their potential. The weavers, too, have turned into savvy innovators, adapting to the market while preserving the soul of the weave.

CONSTITUTION DAY

THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **'SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC]** and to secure to all its citizens :

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all;

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the **'[unity and integrity of the Nation]**;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Sovereign Democratic Republic" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Unity of the Nation" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)



Cuban gar, a critically endangered fish according to the IUCN, at Zapata Swamp in Cuba, the Caribbean's largest intact wetland. Centuries of exploitation, habitat loss, and the 1999 introduction of the African walking cat fish, an invasive species that has ravaged the once-pristine swamp, are culprits in its precipitous decline. Cuban scientists are racing against time to save this fish which is as old as the dinosaurs.